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HISTORIC SPOTS IN SUMMERVILLE.

BY LAWTON B. EVANS.

The Village of Summerville, which is now the Sixth Ward of the City of Augusta, has acquired considerable celebrity of late on account of the presence of two large winter hotels and its popularity with the Northern tourists. It lies well above Augusta on the west. During the day the smoke of the city's industries hovers like mist over a valley. At night the lights of the city look like harbor lights upon darkened waters.

The Village now boasts of a Country Club, golf links and fine houses, and during the winter season is a scene of pleasure by day and revelry by night. But it has not always been so. Its history dates back before the times of the Revolution, when it was merely a quiet and obscure residence place for a few people of Augusta, who approached it by old time methods, from their places of business on the low levels.

Summerville as a place of residence has a record for more than one hundred years, when Augusta was a very small town of a few thousand people and the Village of Summerville itself, instead of being a part of Augusta as it is now, was then removed by several miles from the activity of the town.

Tradition does not say who first came to Summerville, or, as it is more popularly known in Augusta, "The Hill," but it is well understood that from Revolutionary times on there has been a decided preference for it as a place of residence. Only of late years has it come into its fame, but for many generations has it been a pleasant place for those who are weary of the struggle and the temperature of the lower portions of the city.

As far back as 1790 Thomas Cumming established his home on the Hill and owned a considerable portion of its present area. He built a small home, which since has increased in size and changed in appearance, but it has been held in its original family, who for three or four generations have kept the Cumming estate.

About the same time John Milledge, who was Governor of Georgia, likewise moved to the Hill and established himself in what was known for many generations as the "Milledge Place." It also was a small house, and being on the eastern brow of the Hill, overlooked the Savannah Valley, in which, in all probability, John Milledge had his own farm lands. There John Milledge lived for many years in his

old age, and it was at this place he died and from this place was carried to the little cemetery, which then was far back on the Hill, but which now is practically the center of its population.

John Milledge was one of the notable men of the Revolution. He was Governor of Georgia in 1802. For him Milledgeville is named, and with him is closely associated the early history of our State. Near him located about 1810 James Gardner, and, later on, Thomas Gardner, John Howard and Hugh Nesbit—all of them not far from the Cumming home. These families seem to have made the original unit of which Summerville was composed, clustering together on the eastern slope of the Hill; and back of them, through the woods, trails, paths and sandy roads led into the interior. In all probability this group of men first called the village by its name of Summerville, since it afforded unusual advantages for summer residence. The approach to this group of residences was through what is known now as "Battle Row."

The original name of Battle Row may have been Battle Road, and it is certain that on this road occurred some of the battles of the Revolutionary War, since on it is the famous White House, at which certain atrocities of the Tories during the siege of Augusta were committed. At any rate the name of Battle Row has adhered to this particular road for so many years, and its origin is so obscure, that no one now seems to know why it was so named. There is an intimation on the part of some of the old citizens that it was the scene of many turbulent conflicts between the original settlers on the outskirts of the city, who were workers in small mills and industries of various sorts and who would waylay travelers passing in that direction from time to time and hand-to-hand conflicts would occur which in themselves were sufficient to give the name to the road. At any rate Battle Row was the only approach to the Hill for many years.

Near the Cumming estate there stood an old house which was not much more than a barn but which grew into a small store and also into a school. It seems that a certain Mr. Sandwich, who called himself Lord Sandwich (though nobody knows why), opened up a store and began a school at this place. He called it Mount Salubrity Academy. He had a few pupils coming from the farms nearby, as well as the children of the residents of the Hill, and he put up a rather conspicuous sign at the crossroads, which sign can be remembered at the present day by the older inhabitants of the Hill.

The Hill is now approached by a much larger and more pretentious highway, and trolley cars and automobiles find their way to the thickly populated portions. In the early history of Summerville this road was not more than a path lying through swamps, and was by no means passable for vehicles. Later on, when the United States Arsenal was located on the Hill, about 1832, this pathway through the swamps was widened and covered with planks, and for many years was known as the "Plank Road" to the Hill. A toll gate at both ends of the Plank Road demanded passage fees of all travelers. It was only in late years that this plank road was abandoned and a graded road was made that was suitable for the passage of more pretentious ways of transportation. At the site of what is now the Bon Air Hotel there was merely a bluff that was inaccessible to vehicles but which could be scaled by adventurous riders, and there are several old residents of the Hill to-day who speak of the perils of approaching town from the top of the Hill by the old Plank Road.

Early in the century John Forsyth came and joined the group of residents, and built a small house near the Cumming estate, which even at this date is known as the "John Forsyth House." John Forsyth was one of the great orators and statesmen of Georgia. He was an eminent lawyer, one time Governor of the State, and was the representative of the United States at the court of Spain in 1819, where his persuasive eloquence succeeded in securing from the Spanish Government the cession of the territory of Florida. As many others of these houses, the Forsyth house has since been changed and added to, but there is a tradition among the present owners of the house that at least one room of it still remains as originally built, in which room Lafayette was entertained upon his visit to Augusta in 1825.

Next to the old John Forsyth house is the Terrett home, that once in its history was the winter residence of Mr. Taft, who occupied it during the season preceding his inauguration as President of the United States. The only other Governor of Georgia who had a home on the Hill was Charles J. Jenkins, who lived there for many years after he became Governor, and who died and was buried from his residence there. He was Governor during the reconstruction period, and administered the affairs of the state during the most trying times. It will be remembered that when he was deposed from office he took the seal of the Executive Department of the State and the State's funds with him when he retired to Halifax. When the State was reconstructed and Gov. Jenkins returned to Geor-

gia, he restored the seal and the State money to the proper authorities, saying that he was glad that the seal of State had never been desecrated by a usurper's hand. He was granted a medal by the State of Georgia, on which was inscribed "*In arduis fidelis*." These words are inscribed upon his tombstone in the little cemetery on the Hill where he was buried. His home has passed into the hands of a winter resident, and is now one of the most beautiful places in the village.

Richard Henry Wilde also lived on the Hill in the early part of the last century in a very small cottage which has been preserved almost entirely, but which was moved from its original location to an adjoining lot. Here Richard Henry Wilde lived and wrote some of his sweetest verses. He will be long remembered as the author of that sad but beautiful lament known as "My life is like the summer rose." He practiced law, but was ever more fond of literature than he was of the legal profession. He spent many years in Italy, studying the life of Tasso, and became an eminent authority on that Italian poet. There is a tradition that in his studies in Florence he became interested in the frescoes of the Bargello, and that his studies led him to believe that a portrait of Dante was concealed behind certain frescoes. Obtaining authority to remove the frescoes, he uncovered a portrait of Dante which is now accepted as the authoritative likeness of that great poet. In the rear of the Wilde home was his own little cemetery, in which his family were buried. On the tombstone of one of his children, I find the following epitaph:

"Love, hope and pride lament thee—lost too soon—
Yet even our very grief with every breath
Confesses length of days is misery and the boon
Heaven sends its favorites, an early death."

Wilde himself was buried in the rear of his cottage and his grave remained there for many years. Subsequently his remains were removed to the larger cemetery in Augusta and are buried near that other great poet, Paul Hamilton Hayne.

The United States Arsenal was located on the Hill in 1832. It is quite a large though not a very pretentious arsenal, and for many years it has been the headquarters of the Ordnance Department of the South Atlantic States. It came into public notice in 1861, when Governor Brown came to Augusta to demand its surrender by the United States Government, when Georgia seceded from the Union. The

ceremony of this surrender was very simple. There was no parade and no opposition. The demand for its surrender was made, and after a few preliminary exchanges of courteous notes, and without any violence whatsoever, a committee of citizens accompanied the Governor in the formal ceremony of lowering the United States flag and raising the flag of Georgia. The post, of course, was untenable by the United States Government at that time, and its taking over was a simple matter for the State authorities.

Back of the arsenal is what is known as the "Madame LeVert House." Mme. LeVert was a granddaughter of George Walton, signer of the Declaration of Independence. She married Dr. LeVert, of Mobile, Alabama, and after his death moved to the Hill to live. She was a famous woman in her time—a traveler and author, who wrote the "Souvenirs of Travel," a book that is charming in its recital of everyday affairs in Europe.

Another one of the old historic spots on the Hill is what is known as the home of Alfred Cumming, another distinguished member of the Cumming family who, as a soldier in the War of 1812, came to the attention of the United States authorities. When Utah was organized as a territory, Alfred Cumming was appointed Governor, thereby acquiring a title which has always attached to his name. After his term of office expired, he moved to the Hill, where he lived at the time of his death. The Governor was quite a large man, weighing something near 400 pounds. In front of his home there was a bench of very ample proportions and of considerable strength, on which the Governor would sit waiting for his carriage to convey him to the city. This bench became known as "The Governor's Seat," and remained so for many years after his death.

Further up on the Hill was an old house known as the "Smyser Home." Mr. Smyser came to Augusta from Charleston, and bought a tract of land upon which he built a small but comfortable home. It was then on the outskirts of the village but now it has been completely surrounded by the growth of the population. Upon the death of Mr. Smyser the place was purchased by the late Joseph R. Lamar, who was then a lawyer in Augusta, and who subsequently became one of the Associate Justices of the Supreme Court of the United States. Judge Lamar improved the place considerably and it has become one of the notable places in the village.

A few miles back of the Hill is an old farm-house where once lived the father of General Joseph Wheeler, of fame in the Confederate War and in the Spanish War. Here Gen-
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eral Wheeler was born and spent his boyhood as a farmer's son. The road leading into the village from the west is still known as "The Wheeler Road," because it led out to the Wheeler farm.

The cemetery of the Hill was first intended to be beyond the range of the ordinary resident, and was far back in the woods at the time it was located. Since its location, however, the village has grown up to it. It includes among the list of those buried there, a number who are notable in the history of the State. George W. Crawford was buried there in the family burying-ground, being brought from his home at Bel Air, about ten miles from Augusta; Charles J. Jenkins and John Milledge are also buried in the small cemetery; Charles C. Jones, Jr., who was a noted historian of the State, and whose residence was on the Hill, is likewise buried there. Among the others are C. Shaler Smith, who during the Civil War was the engineer in charge of construction of the powder works, and who has passed into history as the designer of the cantilever bridge; also Prosper J. Berckmans, who was the leading horticulturist of America at the time of his death; Joseph R. Lamar; Judge Ebenezer Starnes, and others who have played important parts in the history of the nation and the community.

The Village of Summerville is already one of the winter residence beauty spots of the South, but it has buried in it these historic reminiscences that make it most attractive to those who care to preserve the traditions of the old times. All of the old homes have changed, new roads have been opened, and the pleasure seeker at the Country Club and on the golf links are passing spots that have been noted in the history of Georgia for more than a hundred years.

There are very few places in Georgia that have a longer history or a more notable one than this little village. It is indeed well in these times of progress and expense and extravagance to remember that the soil upon which we tread is saturated with the traditions of all these years and that the flavor of by-gone times lingers around the places where we live and have our pleasures. The influence of these traditions is plainly felt by those who live permanently in the village, and there are those of us who like to point out the places where things happened many years ago, and still love to show the homes where the notable men of our state lived and reared their families.

In these hurrying times, when streets are changed and large hotels are built, gardens are opened, and fortunes are spent in making beautiful homes, we still cry back to the past times when these spots were made notable and sacred by

the tradition of men who labored in the interest of the public cause rather than spent their time in seeking extravagant pleasures.

SOME OFFICIAL LETTERS OF GOVERNOR EDWARD TELFAIR.

The letters herewith presented are only a small portion of the correspondence of Governor Telfair, and are taken from a manuscript volume in the possession of the Georgia Historical Society which contains also some letters of Governor Samuel Elbert, whom Mr. Telfair succeeded.

Reference is made to the important subject of the boundary between Georgia and South Carolina—a subject upon which much has been written, and which has not by any means been clearly understood. The most intelligent and reasonable discussion of the question that we have seen is contained in an opinion given by the Hon. George Hillyer, in the year 1915, in the case of the State of Georgia *versus* the Georgia Railway and Power Company. Mr. Hillyer has very kindly consented to the request of the editor to let it be reproduced in the Quarterly, to follow the letters of Governor Telfair, and we are sure our readers will be glad to be so highly favored.

Copy of Letters in the year 1786:

To the Honorable the Board of Treasury:

Augusta, 14th January, 1786.

Gentlemen:

The Legislature have received and acknowledged Job Sumner, Esquire, as Commissioner of Accounts for this State, and have required that I notify the same to your Honorable Board. I am Gentlemen,

Your most Hble. serv't,

E. T.

In Council, 16th February, 1786.

Joseph Clay, Esq.,
Savannah.

Sir:

Pursuant to the Order of the Executive hereunto annexed you will please to deliver in charge of Mr. James Pearre